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Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs
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Province Transfers Crown Land to Inuit Community Governments

Today, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is pleased to announce the transfer of freehold title to all provincial Crown land in the Inuit communities of Nain, Postville, Makkovik and Rigolet to the respective Inuit Community Governments. The transfer of provincial Crown land in the Inuit communities is a requirement of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement.

The Honourable Patty Pottle, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, on behalf of the Government of Newfoundland Labrador, presented the land transfer documents to AngajukKaks (mayors), Sara Erickson (Nain), Keith Decker (Postville), Herb Jacque (Makkovik) and Dan Michelin (Rigolet). Also in attendance were the Honourable John Hickey, Minister of Labrador Affairs; Tony Andersen, acting president of the Nunatsiavut Government; Toby Andersen, deputy minister of Nunatsiavut Affairs; Hopedale AngajukKak Judy Dicker; and town managers.

"This is another historic day for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and especially the Inuit people," said Minister Pottle. "This land transfer represents the strong and mutually beneficial relationship our governments enjoy and is a testament to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's commitment to implementing the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement."

"Without timely implementation, land claims agreements can become meaningless," said Tony Andersen, acting president of the Nunatsiavut Government. "The land transfer agreement is a superb example of our governments working together to ensure that the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement is implemented in a timely and efficient manner."

Minister Pottle acknowledged the presence of Hopedale AngajukKak Dicker at today's ceremony. At the request of the Nunatsiavut Government and the community, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has agreed to delay the transfer of lands in Hopedale.

"We all look forward to the day – hopefully in the not-to-distant future – when Hopedale joins Nain, Postville, Makkovik, and Rigolet in the transfer of community lands," said Minister Pottle. "This delay is necessary to further investigate environmental concerns that may require remediation. The transfer of lands in Hopedale will happen when these concerns have been addressed to the satisfaction of all concerned."

On August 29, 2003, negotiators for the province, LIA and the Government of Canada initialed the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement, triggering the commencement of the Inuit ratification process. On May 26, 2004, the Labrador Inuit voted overwhelmingly to ratify the agreement, with 76 per cent of eligible voters supporting it.

The Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement was signed by the Labrador Inuit Association, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Government of Canada in Nain, on January 22, 2005. Thursday, December 1, 2005, marked the effective date of the agreement, which sets out a new regime for land ownership, resource sharing and self-government, including Inuit ownership of 15,800 square kilometres of land to be known as Labrador Inuit Lands.

The agreement also provides for the establishment of two levels of Inuit government, a regional government known as the Nunatsiavut Government, and five Inuit Community Governments. The first Inuit Community Government elections were held in September 2006.

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On October 4, 2006, the Nunatsiavut Government held its first general election for Nunatsiavut Assembly members. The AngajukKaks of the Inuit Community Governments also sit on the Nunatsiavut Government Assembly.

"I congratulate the Nunatsiavut Government on this eventful day," said the Honourable John Hickey, Minister of Labrador Affairs. "Today's transfer of land is essential to the Inuit communities of Labrador as they continue to implement self-government, which they have worked so hard for decades to achieve."

"This is a very significant achievement and another step towards implementation of self-government," said Toby Andersen, Deputy Minister of Nunatsiavut Affairs. "The Land Transfer Agreement is one of the obligations we had to meet under Chapter 17 of the Labrador Inuit Land Clams Agreement. It has been a long process for both the Nunatsiavut Government and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to achieve this agreement, but we have done it."

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search | Home | Back to Government | Contact Us | TOP

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